

SHORTLANDS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1934

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2017

www.shortlandsresidents.org.uk

SRA Parking Survey - The Results

Residents feel pushed out of their own roads by commuter parking

Commuter parking controls should be introduced where there are problems

Parking controls must be properly enforced

The Council must provide a co-ordinated control plan

Many residents – members and non-members of the SRA – completed our survey on parking problems. More than 430 responses were received and we are grateful to those who took the time to provide their views. Parking pressures are clearly seen as a growing problem, exacerbated by new developments in and around the area. The survey gives us hard facts about the extent of the problem, and highlights residents' views on parking and what solutions they might favour.

This is a major piece of work for the Association and we will present our findings in detail at the AGM on 26 April. But some of the key conclusions are:

The residential nature of roads within walking distance of the station (and in some cases further away) or on bus routes has been detrimentally affected with residents feeling pushed out of their

own roads. The problem has grown considerably in recent years, at least in part, because of the increased costs of public transport, the closing of the Westmoreland Rd multi-storey car park and the opening of the new Harris Academy School. The new Ravensbourne Station Controlled Parking Zone may also be a contributing factor.

A significant number of residents of these roads would like to see some form of Controlled Parking Zone with residents' parking permits.

Some respondents reported that commuters are taking advantage of free street parking to reduce their commuting costs by, for example, driving from Sevenoaks on a daily basis.

A significant number of residents, of some Shortlands roads, do not want any change to the current parking situation. These roads are ones further away from the station or bus stops for commuters to walk to, or ones where residents have adequate off street parking for their own needs and that of their visitors.

Observation shows a displacement of parking to adjacent roads after new parking schemes have been introduced (e.g. Westmoreland Road shops and Ravensbourne Station) and indicates how vital it is to consider a wider co-ordinated scheme for the area.



Some respondents felt that controlled parking would free up spaces during the day releasing short term parking spaces for people to visit Shortlands shops and other local facilities.

An unacceptably high percentage of respondents were dissatisfied with the standards of road and gutter cleaning. Gutter cleaning is impossible during the week because of tightly parked commuters' cars.

Bromley has pollution limits over the European legal limit and deaths attributed to pollution are also high. Persuading commuters back on to public transport would help to reduce this.

Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with litter in the streets and the inadequate provision of street litter bins and reported a perceived lack of enforcement of the regulations that currently exist.

We have produced a detailed report (available on the SRA web site (www.shortlandsresidents.org.uk) and we have arranged to present our findings to local Councillors and London Borough of Bromley officers and invited them to consider our findings and come back with firm proposals. We will report back in future newsletters and at April's AGM.

Brian Dunk

Brian, who was an active member of the SRA committee for a number of years, sadly passed away in December. He took an active interest in local affairs, including being a governor at Highfield Schools. He pursued issues relentlessly and never failed to make a personal commitment to the issues he cared about. In keeping with the family's wishes the SRA made a donation to St Christopher's Hospice in Brian's memory. Our thoughts are with his wife, Diane, and family.



SRA A.G.M.

Our A.G.M. this year will take place at 8.00 p.m. on Wednesday 26 April in St Mary's church hall. This year, rather than inviting a guest speaker to address our members, we will give a presentation on the findings and follow up discussions from our parking survey, summarised on page 1, and which was a significant piece of work for the Association.

Planning Developments

Bromley Council arranges an excellent annual Planning Seminar for local Residents' Associations. In one of the sessions we were advised that part of the local plan is to provide for 641 net additional homes each year for the next 10 years.

When reviewing planning applications each month, writes SRA Development Officer, Danny Miller, I notice a number of applications to convert existing houses into flats by demolishing the current building and erecting something larger overall. Occasionally an application is to build a small second house on the same land, for example on a corner plot.

Very frequently applications of this nature are rejected. Sometimes this is with the support of the SRA where we regard the development is being out of proportion with adjacent properties and with the rest of the street. The problem with this approach is the obvious one that if we are successful, while the existing street scene is protected it makes it that much more difficult for the Council to achieve its obligations regarding new homes.

This is to some extent reflected in the number of appeals made against the planning refusals made by officers or councillors. We were advised at the meeting that the national refusal rate is 12% compared to the overall London refusal rate of 20% and the Bromley rate of 29%. However, this leads to 275 appeals per annum 34% of which are granted.

This creates a conflict. It would appear that Bromley Council is both to be applauded for doing its best to avoid overdevelopment but on the other hand rejecting too many applications has led to too many appeals, one third of which are granted. No doubt senior planners seek to identify any general

theme in those cases which are approved on appeal but there does seem to be inconsistency in decision-making on appeal.

These days a great deal is at stake and it is not surprising that in some cases there are multiple applications, refusals and subsequent appeals. One property in our area has been the subject of three applications in recent months, all of which have been refused and two appeals have been dismissed. Each new application has been for a progressively smaller building and in the most recent appeal the building itself was deemed no longer to be overbearing in relation to its neighbours but the appeal was dismissed on the grounds of the effect on local traffic and pedestrian safety.

Most recently we have also made a submission in respect of the Golf Course by suggesting that it should be the subject of additional protection against development by declaring it to be a Local Green Space.

Shortlands Library Update

The long-term future of our local library is still uncertain, with threats of closure going back well over a year. The good news is that it is currently open and functioning effectively.

Since we last wrote about Shortlands Library in our Spring 2016 Newsletter, quite a lot has happened. Community Links, the 'preferred bidder' last Spring for running the six community libraries, including Shortlands, decided after all to withdraw. As a result, there were no specific proposals on the table to manage the community libraries for the Council to consider. It was decided that the community libraries operation should be included in the commissioning of the eight core library services including the back-office function.

The Council is now engaged in another tendering process for the core library services, now including the community libraries. Decisions on the award of the contract are currently expected in March or April.

So, whatever the conclusions, it is highly likely our Library will stay open at least until this Autumn. Indeed, a new programme of the Monday afternoon meetings, Tea and Topics, has just been published for the first quarter of the year. We shall continue to keep you informed.

Our First Guided Walk Of South Hill Wood

For the first time we are organizing, in conjunction with the Friends, a guided walk through South Hill Wood. Starting at the *South Hill Wood Bowling Club at 2, Tootswood Road, Bromley, at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday 6 May*, the walk will take us through the history of the wood, highlighting local flora and fauna, as well as some mysterious structures.



A remnant of ancient woodland, it was purchased in 1887 by the first Charter Mayor of Bromley Sir Thomas Dewey, who built his house at 1, South Hill Road and designed his grounds with stables, sunken gardens, exotic plants and trees. Our tour will show how the woods have changed over the centuries to what they are today and give opportunities to see woodpeckers and nuthatches and many different plants and insects.

If you would like to join us, please contact Mike Ricketts on 0208 460 0395. (We now have BT Call Guardian installed, so, when you call, you may be asked to give your name before being put through. Please continue to hold after giving your name.)

More Diary Dates

We are planning a number of other local events during the year, including our ever popular *annual historical walk around Shortlands (2.30pm on Saturday 17 June)*, a tour in August of The Great House, built 300 years ago and now the site of Bishop Challoner School, and another discounted visit to the Keeping Gallery in Church Road, probably in September. Watch out for more details in our Spring Newsletter.

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